

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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APPLE AND POTATO GROWERS CAN SIGN UP FOR DISASTER AID

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) today announced that beginning on August 13 apple and potato growers can sign up for assistance to compensate them for weather-related damage suffered in 1999 and 2000. Last year Hinchey authored the amendment that added this \$38 million in assistance to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's budget.

"I saw first-hand the devastation to apple growers caused by hail and other severe weather last year and the year before," said Hinchey. "The federal government should be doing everything it can to help these hardworking people who have suffered so much in recent years. I am gratified that these funds are now being made available."

As a member of the House Appropriations Committee, Hinchey wrote the amendment to the Fiscal Year 2001 Agriculture Appropriations bill to provide \$115 million in emergency relief for growers who have suffered several consecutive years of weather-related crop losses and record low prices. The congressional leadership made repeated attempts to strip Hinchey's amendment from the bill, but failed. The bill passed the House with the Hinchey amendment intact in June 2000. Then, as a member of the joint House-Senate conference committee, Hinchey negotiated the final agreement in which the amount was raised to \$138 million. One hundred million dollars of that sum was set aside for market losses suffered by apple growers, while \$38 million was earmarked for quality losses suffered by apple and potato growers due to weather-related problems. The market loss assistance was distributed last month.

Apple and potato growers who suffered at least a 20 percent loss in the quality of their crop are eligible to apply for the Quality Loss Program. Payments will be made for loss in value due to quality and for losses due to unharvested production. Interested growers should contact their local Farm Service Agency for information on how to apply.

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